

*Joins several Southwestern colleagues to protect key program*

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep Harry Mitchell today offered an amendment to block a funding cut to the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) that reimburses state and local law enforcement agencies for the cost of arresting and jailing illegal immigrants. SCAAP has been cut by \$100 million in a bill making its way through Congress.

"When state and local governments are forced to step-in and do the federal government's job, it is only fair that they be reimbursed," Mitchell said. "If we are serious about immigration enforcement, we must restore SCAAP funding, and reimburse states like Arizona for keeping criminal illegal immigrants behind bars."

Mitchell's amendment to the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Bill blocks the \$100 million cut to SCAAP. Reps. Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ), Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ), David Dreier (R-CA), Michael Honda (D-CA), Jerry Lewis (R-CA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Ken Calvert (R-CA), Chet Edwards (D-TX), Gary Miller (R-CA), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), Alan Mollohan (D-WV) have also signed onto the amendment.

The SCAAP program received \$400 million in fiscal year FY 2009 but the President's budget included no funds for the program in FY 2010. Following a call on appropriators in Congress last month by Mitchell, Giffords and Kirkpatrick to restore funding for the program, the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee moved a bill forward that restores \$300 million for SCAAP in FY 2010, falling 25 percent short of this year's levels. Mitchell and several other Arizona lawmakers then wrote to Reps. David Obey and Jerry Lewis, the top Democrat and Republican on the House Appropriations Committee in opposition of the 25 percent cut.

Last week, Mitchell [took to the floor of the House of Representatives](#) to express his outrage over the cut and urge his colleagues to oppose it.

SCAAP is a critical source of funds for cash-strapped state and local agencies that are forced to divert resources from public safety services to deal with illegal immigrants. In 2008, the

Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) received \$12.8 million from the federal government to house the 5,600 criminal illegal immigrants who were in state prisons. That is only 10% of the \$124 million Arizona spent to house illegal immigrant inmates that year. ADC estimates it will spend \$128 million in 2009 to house, clothe, feed and provide medical care to illegal immigrant inmates. That is over 10 percent of the Department's \$978 million budget. Currently, Arizona's state prisons hold 6,100 illegal immigrants, which is 15 percent of the total inmate population.